

# THE BOYS INITIATIVE

Testimony in OPPOSITION to SB17:

The Boys Initiative is a nonprofit organization dedicated to implementing solutions to the issues and trends affecting the well-being and success of boys and young men in our nation and around the world.

We urge you to oppose SB17: Child Custody - Cases Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence - Training for Judges.

SB17 would train judges false information about parental alienation, including: (i) the origins of parental alienation; (ii) the invalidity of parental alienation as a syndrome; and (iii) the inappropriateness of the use of parental alienation in child custody cases.

Parental alienation is a real phenomenon often used by one parent to alienate a child from the other parent in child custody cases. It is listed in DSM-5, the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), under diagnostic code V 995.51 "child psychological abuse," and there has been considerable research to support it as a diagnosis.

Critics of parental alienation who want to deny its existence often point to a 2019 study done by Professor Joan Meier. Unfortunately, the inability to replicate the study using open science practices has led to the conclusion the results are unreliable.

Most concerning about parental alienation is when mothers claim to be "protective" and alienate their child against the father or other positive male role model. Boys and young men need the influence of their fathers. Nearly 25 percent of America's children live in mother-only families. Study after study shows that the involvement of a father or a positive male role model has profound effects on children. Father-child interaction promotes a child's physical well-being, perceptual ability, and competency in relating to others. Furthermore, these children also demonstrate a greater ability to take initiative and display self-control. Children without positive male role models are more likely to be

involved in criminal activity, have premarital sex, do poorer in school, and participate in unhealthy activities.

Please oppose SB17. This bill trains judges to view parental alienation as junk science. It is not. It is a form of child psychological abuse that is used in child custody cases to the detriment of society. Maryland's boys and young men deserve judges to be trained on the truth.

Respectfully,

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